Chapter 16

HOME LIFE AT No. 1

293 [132] 854 482 When the women are working in the fields through the heat of the day—and it is very, very hot at 7,800 feet with a temperature of 105° in the shade—they usually have a large square of cotton cloth with them, which they sometimes throw over their heads for protection. This cloth turns in for all sorts of purposes; if you are carrying a small quantity of flour home from the mill you can wrap it up and tie it across from one shoulder to the other armpit and so keep both hands free. If the baby is too small to sit safely on your back or shoulders, you treat it in the same way. In fact, if you see a woman with this kind of bundle that appears to have two lumps in it you may safely guess that it's a baby.

342 I made great friends with the family who worked just below us (I have named them in my notebook Household No. 1), and I felt quite sad when their wheat harvest was over—it was so convenient just to run down and join them in sight of our own windows. They asked me, however: "Won't you come home and sit in our shade?" Of course I accepted with delight. It was just a few steps along the Dála and down one of the little lanes, half path, half watercourse. We came to a slightly taller, mud-plastered wall on the left with a wooden door in it. Through this I stepped in to a tiny courtyard with a shed on each side, one for straw and one for the lambs and kids. The [333] house itself is just a rough cube of stones plastered with mud, and it has a flat roof with a smoke-hole in it above the central hearth. You go up by a ladder, and the roof makes a nice place for sitting out, watching the neighbours go by, spinning, and drying apricots. It has a second store-room built on a part of

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

squatted at the base of a big tree, and the tribal brothers of each bridegroom led him to the dance. The Diramiting led off and the other clans followed in their recognized order of precedence. Each unhappy bridegroom was amazingly got up. Instead of his ordinary homespun cap he was coiffed with an exotic white or coloured turban with a tuft of feathers at one side held in place by a fancy brooch and a dangling string of beads looped on to it. A brightly coloured silk shirt floated out over a startlingly white pair of baggy cotton trousers and (if he could afford it) a loose silk robe replaced his normal homespun *choga*. He carried in his right hand an old-fashioned battle-axe tied with silken ribbons, and in this gaudy attire he looked as ill at ease as bridegrooms the world over.

The picturesqueness of the Hunza dancing, which is the mainstay of every form of merry-making, is nowadays much impaired by dancers who have acquired short-sleeved, would-be European shooting-jackets or tight trousers, or—worse still—have adopted tennis shoes or ammunition boots or some other form of horrible non-local footgear instead of the orthodox bare feet or soft leather boot. When carried out in the correct dress of the country Hunza dancing is amusing and interesting. Most of the footwork is merely a variant of a sort of polka-step—now short, now long, now in great leaps, now in fierce stamps, now on the toe, now on the flat foot. There is one characteristic step which would require a lot of practice: with one knee bent very deep, you rotate on that foot giving regular little taps on the ground with the other till the circle is complete; then you reverse and repeat in the opposite direction.

Each dancer dances independently, but the five or ten in the ring at any one moment all try to synchronize their steps in time to the music. The footwork, however, is but a small part of the dance; what is most admired is the action of the body and of the arms; these are waved and flung about and bent in a hundred different patterns. The long *choga* sleeves which dangle 6 or 8 inches below the hand give a most fantastic effect to these gestures.

When the second bridegroom's group came to dance they